



WIDE AWAKE PAGE FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

Edited by MARY MARSHALL



A Blow for Cuba Libre.

By WILLIAM BANKS.

It was a very hot day even for Cuba. Every living thing moved listlessly.

On a slight hill about a mile from the fort a man and a youth were talking lazily on the ground. The lad was about eighteen years of age, tall, well-built, and unmistakably an American. His companion, a native Cuban, was at least thirty years old, short, but with a frame denoting immense strength.

They had been watching the fort for an hour or more through a powerful field glass, and following closely the movements of the sentries on the wall nearest them.

"That," said the lad at last, "they're only a lot of boys."

The man smiled at him meaningly, and the lad blushed.

"I know," he continued, hesitatingly, "that you're thinking I'm just a boy, too, but, 'I'm an American!'"

"So," answered the man, softly, "and had I a few more such lads as you in my command I'd strike a great blow for Cuba today."

The youth's father was a prisoner in the fort. For five years Mr. Hinton, a native of Pennsylvania, had resided with his son Ben in Havana, where he carried on business as a general merchant. Among Cubans Mr. Hinton was well known as a sympathizer in their cause. Immediately on receipt of the news in Havana that Gen. Antonio Maceo had taken the field he decided to lend his active aid to the Cuban insurgent leader. Mr. Hinton had suggested that Ben go back to relatives in America, but this proposition the lad stoutly opposed, so his father was at last compelled to consent to Ben's accompanying him.

Accordingly, one evening Mr. Hinton, Ben, and Ben left Havana secretly. By traveling at night, and lying concealed during the day, they reached the outskirts of the province of Puerto Principe. Here, at the little village, thirty natives joined them. Ben was elected captain of the band. But one morning they were suddenly surrounded by an overwhelming force of Spanish soldiers. With desperate courage, Captain Hinton, Ben, and some twenty-five men cut their way out of the cordon of soldiers and sought safety in flight.

It was not until the Spaniards gave up the chase that any one noticed that Mr. Hinton was not with the party. Toward evening a man who joined the party brought comparative happiness to Ben by the report that he had watched from the woods a party of Spanish soldiers marching along with an American prisoner in their midst. The description of the prisoner tallied so closely with that of Mr. Hinton as to leave no doubt of his identity.

Two days later they located the fort which was the headquarters of the soldiers who had attacked them, and it was this Ben and Capt. Mario were now watching.

In front of the barracks, and about twenty feet from it, was a small hut, in which, Ben and Capt. Mario, by the aid of the field-glass, had learned, Mr. Hinton was confined.

Capt. Mario and Ben decided that the attempted rescue must be made that night.

In accordance with the plan decided upon, after the night was well advanced, Capt. Mario and Ben, with eight men, lay in the shadows under the eastern wall of the fort. They lis-

tened until they heard the sentry walk past the position they occupied, and then Mario, mounting upon the shoulders of the men, scrambled to the top of the wall. Shortly the sentry came along on his return patrol, humming a Spanish song. He did not notice the prostrate form until he almost trod upon it. It was then too late to give warning, for Mario sprang up, and with all the strength of which he was capable, struck the man full on the mouth, and followed this up immediately by grasping him around the waist and fairly throwing him over the wall. Here a dozen hands quickly grasped the soldier, who was gagged and bound before he could utter a cry.

Then one by one the Cubans with Ben scrambled up, and the whole ten made a rush for the small hut. Three sleepy guards were cut down in a few seconds, the door of the building was forced open, and Mr. Hinton was led out to his son.

"Dad, dear old Dad!" cried Ben.

"Ben! my boy!" was the answer.

At this moment a shot was fired and a sentry on the western wall fell. Instantly a tremendous hubbub arose within the barracks, and the Spaniards began to pour out of the building. But before they had time to load their rifles the remaining Cubans, who had got into the ground by way of the western wall, joined Capt. Mario and those with him, and the little band of twenty-five flung themselves on the Spaniards.

While the fighting was going on Ben suddenly found himself thrust against something, which proved to be the flagpole, and, looking up, discovered the Spanish flag waving overhead. He hauled on the ropes, but they would not work. Placing his clasp-knife between his teeth, he climbed the staff, until he clasped the folds of the flag with his left hand; then he was compelled to sever the halyards with his knife.

From his airy perch Ben turned his eyes in the direction of the struggle. He could barely distinguish the outlines of the surging mass of men. But high above the din of oaths and cries in Spanish, the clash of bayonet, sword blade, and the favorite Cuban weapon, the machete, arose the exulting cry: "Cuba Libre! Cuba Libre!"

Suddenly, a single long shrill note from a whistle pierced the air. It was Mario's prearranged signal, and it came none too soon.

At the signal, however, the Cubans retired with surprising swiftness, carrying with them the bodies of several of their comrades who had fallen. As they passed the staff Ben slipped down among them, the flag bundled up under his left arm. The gate had already been opened by two Cubans, who had been assigned that duty. The whole band rushed through, three or four men in mere bravado lingering to pull the gate to after them.

As they fled several Spaniards mounted the embankment and sent a volley after them, one bullet striking Ben's left arm. A little cry of pain escaped him, but he clenched his teeth, and grasping the flag still tighter, hurried on.

No pursuit was made, and after placing



BILLY'S BEAR FIGHT

By HUBERT EARL.

Broiled trout washed down with an ice-cold draught of spring water is not the worst supper in the world, and when you are out in the woods cozily perched on a log near a roaring camp-fire of crackling birch, with a ravenous appetite, it tastes as good as a dinner served at the finest hotel in New York. But your trout must be cooked by Bill to be enjoyed, for Bill owns no superior in that line. Bill is a hunter, not for market, but a sportsman through the forests of Maine, or, as he terms it, his territory.

One fall he and I started up in the Moosehead Lake region, and slowly worked down over the trails, until one evening we found ourselves near the head of the Cuscutup River, on the Rangeleys.

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admiration doubled by the knowledge of the wonderful strength that lay in his powerful muscles.

"Well, boy," said Bill at last, with a yawn, "I rather think we'd better turn in now. Wrap yourself good or you'll be stiff in the morning!"

I do not know what time it was, but it seemed to me I had no more than closed my eyes when I was suddenly awakened by the sounds of a fierce struggle, with a great amount of low choking, growling, and subdued muttering. I sprang up, forgetting my blanket, which tripped me, and nearly pitched me headlong into the fire.

When I finally reached my feet and saw the cause of the row, I was more than amazed. There was Bill hugging and being hugged for dear life by a good-sized bear. It was nip and tuck, and seizing my rifle I danced around trying to get a shot at the bear. Bill caught sight of me, and cried out in jerks:

"Boys—I'll never forgive you if you kill him. It's the first chance I've had to struggle—a bear, and by gum, I'm er—going to struggle—this one!"

The bear's claws had already played havoc with his clothing, and his legs were bleeding in more than one place. Back and forth they struggled, one of the bear's forepaws around Bill's neck and the other around his waist. Bill held the bear by the throat with one hand, and with the other held his head away to stop him from biting.

Suddenly they tripped on the edge of the slope that led in a gentle descent to the stream below. I jumped forward this time, determined to put an end to it, but before I could reach them, down they went, rolling over and over the sloping ground, fighting away like mad, until, with a crash they struck the thin ice on the stream and plunked out of sight.

It was a bright moonlight night, and the hole they made in the ice looked black and ugly. I jumped down the bank, and seeing the roots of an old tree running out near the spot, I made for it. I crawled out on the roots and yelled to Bill to let me settle it.

"If yer tetch him, boy, I'll never forgive yer. I'm not done yet by a long shot, and I'll down the critter if it takes all night!"

I watched the fun, altogether too serious for fun, I thought. Their struggles were fearful, and I screamed, and would certainly have fired at the bear had it not been for the fear of hitting Bill.

By this time they had worked over to the roots, and then I realized what Bill was up to. He got one arm around them to brace himself, and with the other clutching the bear's throat, he slowly and by main force pushed those fearful red gaping jaws away from him. Slowly and with almost superhuman strength he pushed the head further away until finally he forced it under water.

I could see the claws of the animal's forepaw dig into Bill's shoulder. I could see his violent struggles as he strove to get his head above water, but Bill held him under.

The fight grew weaker and weaker, and there all was still except the quick panting of Bill. At last with a deep sigh his chest relaxed, his hand gave up his prey, and a few bubbles showed where the bear sank. Slowly Bill made his way to where I was standing, and putting out his hand, said:

"Thank ye, boy; you had nerve to obey me, and that makes a good hunter." He was pretty high exhausted and badly clawed. While I helped him to leap up his wounds temporarily I learned that the bear had sneaked into camp during the night and stumbled over Bill, who grabbed him. The next morning we fished him out of the water, and found him a large specimen and a foe well worth letting alone.

My Adventure in a Church

By POWELL CHASE.

It was the end of September that we left home for the summer holiday in the oldest part of Canada. The others went by train all the way, but I decided to ride back part of the way on my bicycle. And everything was fine on the first day, until towards evening, when I was still quite a distance from the village I intended to stop at over night, a storm began to come above the horizon, black clouds hid the sun, and the first thing I knew I made the wrong turn and to make my troubles worse it began to rain.

Well, sometime after that I came to a branch road, with a sign post, and as I didn't mean to get lost again, if I could help it, I shinned up the post with my bicycle lamp in hand and made out that if I took the branch road I'd come to a wayside inn in a couple of miles or so. It wasn't much of a road—and the going was pretty rough—first across a wild open stretch and then through a grove of firs, where it was as black as your hat, and the wind moaned fearfully through the branches overhead.

When I got out into the open again I came to an old church, with a big square tower, black and lonely enough to give you the creeps, not to mention the tombstones standing all round it, and nothing else in sight but that road, going on as if there wasn't any end to it. To cap it all, as a kind of last straw, the rain began to come down in bucketfuls. I dragged the bicycle up against the hedge fence and made for the church porch at top speed.

I cleared out again. Just as I was crossing the churchyard, I thought I saw a kind of light in one of the windows; but it went as quick as it came, and I'd made up my mind it was all in my eye, so to speak, when, sure enough, there it was again. Well, it seemed rather funny, though I reckoned it might be the sexton doing something or other. At all events I went back and got a stone and took a good look through the window, to make sure; but the queer thing was, I couldn't see anything; it looked as dark and quiet as an empty grave.

I'd just about concluded it was fancy after all, and was going to get down, when I saw the light again, and no mistake about it this time. It was like the flame of a match, but that was all I could make out through the colored glass, at first. Luckily, I hit on a small hole, where it was broken a little, and when I put my eye close I could see in easily.

There was a man—a tramp-looking fellow—over on the other side of the church. I could just make out he was forcing open an alms-box with a short iron bar. Once or twice he stopped to light another match and take a look around, and the chance of his spotting my head through the window fairly made my skin tingle. But somehow I couldn't move—sort of fascinated, I suppose. Luckily he didn't see me, though.

Well, I'm a pretty big boy for my age, and just then I was feeling about as fit as possible, thanks to the holiday; so I took another look at him to weigh up my chances. He was a little taller than me, I thought, and had a wiry look about him, and might be a mean one to tackle, but he wasn't likely to be in any extra special form, and anyway, whether he was or not, I'd set my teeth by that time and got my back up.

The light was out again, and this time he didn't seem in a hurry to get another, so I guessed he was busy filling his pockets, and would soon be making for the door. So I slipped round to the porch again, squeezed into the darkest corner, got my fists ready for action, took one or two good long breaths, and waited to see what would happen. If it hadn't been for the leaves the wind had blown in there, he'd have been pretty sure to hear me, no doubt.

It seemed an awful long time that I stood there, squeezed up, though I dare say it wasn't more than a few minutes, really; but, at last, I heard the handle of the door turn in a sneaking sort of way, and then, out he came. I felt sure he would see me; my heart was going like a young sledgehammer. But he didn't; so when he turned to close the

door, out I sprang like lightning and landed him one for all I was worth. I reckoned it would have stunned him, and why on earth it didn't I don't know; but he only gave a sort of gasp, then turned like an eel, and the next minute there we were, choking and panting and staggering about in the dark, like a couple of wild Indians.

We were pretty evenly matched, I suppose, because for a time neither got much the best of it; but after a minute or two more I began to feel I couldn't hold out much longer. My muscles felt like cracking, and he'd got a hold like any boa constrictor—it simply took all the wind out of me—and I expected to hear my ribs go every minute. I knew the next second or two would finish it one way or the other, so I put all the strength I had left into one effort. It bent him back like a bow. Either it was too much for him, or he slipped on the wet ground or something; at any rate, over he went, and caught his head as he fell on the edge of the stone bench against the wall. It sounded like the

me, and I didn't lose much time acting on it. Half hopping, half crawling, I got into the church, lit a match, and looked about for the bell rope. There it was in the tower, fastened in a great loose loop against the wall. There was an old carved chest in the corner. I dragged it out, got upon it, whipped out my knife, reached up, and cut off as much of the rope as I could manage; but it took some time to saw it through, and the jerking and pulling it got set the bell up above going in a quiet way.

That put another notion into my head. I gave the stump of the rope a hard pull. The whole place echoed with the noise I started. It must have sounded queer to any one who heard it. You see, once I'd set the bell going, the end of the rope kept going up out of reach, and it was only now and again I managed to get hold of it, and then it nearly lifted me off my feet.

After pulling at that rope for a minute or two, I crawled back into the porch with the rope I'd cut off. The fellow was lying there as quiet as ever, but his eyelids gave a kind of twitch now and then. So I didn't wait a moment till I'd got the rope well around him, and his arms and legs as tight as a drum. Then I breathed a little freer, and crept back for another pull at the bell. This journey I spotted some candles on a shelf in the tower and soon

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I sprang like lightning and landed him one

clock of a good swipe at a golf ball, and I guess that's what finished him. He lay there like a log after that, and as for me, I collapsed, dead-beat, on the opposite bench; and it took me a minute or two to get my breath back. Then I struck a match and had a look at him, and an ugly looking customer he was, with his face a sort of pale purple and his hair soaked with the blood running from the cut on his head.

I was thinking myself lucky to get off so easily, but when I went to stand up I found something was wrong with my left ankle. In the struggle or fall I must have twisted or sprained it pretty badly. Every minute it got worse, till I felt like yelling with pain. It began to look rather like getting out of the frying pan into the fire. If my friend came to, I thought, I shan't stand much chance in another round. I struck a light again, and took another look at him. He seemed as bad as ever, but was breathing easily, and might come to any moment. Something had to be done. I wasn't going to let my victory slip through my fingers if I knew it. I began to think of giving him another dose as soon as he showed signs of getting over the first, but it's mean to hit a fellow when he's down. The only other thing I could think of was to take a chance at making some one hear, so I crawled outside the porch and shouted my loudest. Once I thought I got an answer, but when I listened again, it was only an owl hooting from the fir grove.

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Caught in a Storm.

Old Mr. Bugg and Mr. Roach were walking home—they'd missed the coach.

A shower caught them on the way. You see, it was an April day.

So, just as soon as it began they started in, you see, and ran. They ran quite hard—they did, you bet—because they didn't like the wet.

The rain soon turned to hail, you see, which pelted them violently. They couldn't find a bit of shelter. So kept on running helter-skelter.

When they had almost reached the town those massive hailstones knocked them down. Those stones were quite as large, 'tis said, as either bugle's handsome head.

When Bugg and Roach reached home, sweet home, they never more would roam. From Buggtown, never more would stray. So far—not on an April day!

